

autonomous district in eastern Anatolia for the few remaining Armenian survivors.

## **The Contribution of the Church Fathers to the Preservation of the Classical Tradition**

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This is a revised version of a lecture delivered at the 2002 Celebration of Greek Letters on the occasion of the Feast Day of the Three Hierarchs in New York. At the time, George Pilitsis was Director of the Archdiocesan Department of Greek Education. I called George from the airport on my way to New York to find out whether he was planning to attend. From the tone of his voice I knew that something was wrong. At first he expressed regrets but finally broke down and told me that he could not attend the Day of Letters because he was scheduled to have major medical tests. A week later he would undergo surgery.

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Ancient Greece produced an immense volume of writing that recorded the birth and development of Western literature, science, drama, philosophy, and other areas of human endeavor. The Homeric epics, the works of Plato and Aristotle, classical Greek drama, the New Testament, the writings of the Eastern Church Fathers and the Justinian legal corpus are only a few examples of the Greek heritage. Despite the influence that ancient Greek literature has exerted throughout the centuries, only a very small portion of it – an estimated 3-5% – survives today. Most ancient texts are lost and what remains is widely scattered, written on fragile papyri and medieval manuscripts, and often difficult to



access. Late antiquity and Byzantium saw the establishment of large research libraries, such as the one built in Alexandria in the third century BC by the Ptolemies, and the Imperial Library of Byzantium. These helped preserve and transmit much of extant literature. Over time, however, these valuable collections – the collective memory of the Greek world – suffered increasingly from accidental destruction, the natural devastation of time and foreign invasion. Thus, most ancient literary works are now irretrievably lost.

The means by which the classics have been preserved and the form in which scholarly activity has taken place have changed over the centuries. Homer, or at least his predecessors, had no physical means of recording their writings. With the development of the Greek alphabet, probably during the eighth century BC, writing became more widespread. Papyri, wax tablets, scrolls, and ultimately books were used to record literary works. Classical scholarship was recorded, copied, preserved and studied in libraries by individual scholars of later antiquity. The study of classical culture flourished for well over two thousand years before our time. The library of Alexandria,<sup>1</sup> undeniably the largest one in antiquity, was established during the Hellenistic period, and was probably designed with Aristotle's library in mind. The exact number of volumes kept in the library is difficult to estimate due to varying reports from ancient authors. According to the Church historian Eusebius and the Byzantine grammarian Tzetzes, the library may have contained 200,000 or 490,000 volumes during the third century. According to other accounts, the library started with 200,000 volumes acquired by the librarian Demetrius, and possessed no less than 700,000 in the first century BC. With later acquisitions, including the gift of 200,000 rolls of the Pergamum Library given by Anthony to Cleopatra, the vast collection at its height possibly comprised nearly one million volumes. The library of Alexandria became an example and

model for future libraries, glorified even by fifteenth- and sixteenth-century humanists. Even though a large part of its collection was destroyed first in the years 48 to 47 B.C. during Caesar's war against Egypt and subsequent wars, its name and influence remain immortal.

Libraries in the ancient world contained copies of books of major importance. Of the works of lesser poets, however, remarkably little has survived. Hundreds of poets and writers are known either by their names only or by the titles of their works. Obviously, the popularity of a certain book or author contributed to the survival of the work. For example, copies of the *Iliad* outnumber copies of the *Odyssey*. Homer's works were the common cultural property of all Hellenes and therefore spread wherever Greeks lived, as the Bible was. Homer has been preserved in 110 codices, Sophocles in nearly 100, Aeschylus in nearly 50, and Plato in 11.

An especially important event for the transmission of ancient literature took place in the second century, when texts were copied and transferred from the papyrus roll to the more enduring form of the parchment (pergamene). It was at that time that books were selected for their content and often for inclusion in the school curriculum. Some authors were preserved, some were not. In reality many factors and events have conspired to deprive us of the greater part of the literary treasures of antiquity. Political persecution was not unknown in ancient times, as exemplified by the public burning of the books of Protagoras in Athens in 411 B.C. Numerous invasions contributed to the loss of many books and libraries. Finally, the ravages of time and climate took their share, to the point that one has to wonder not that we have so few ancient writings but that we have any!

Greek writings had a profound influence on other cultures, too. Practically no aspect of Roman culture was untouched by the Greeks. Latin literary history begins with an adaptation of the *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, and no Roman would have



considered himself well-educated without knowledge of Greek literature. In the words of Plutarch, "Rome was at its greatest at the very time she was most intimate with Greek learning."<sup>2</sup> Greek was not only the language of learning, but also the common language between people of different nationalities in the East.

It was in this cultural world that Christianity made its appearance and it was no accident that the New Testament was written in Greek. In a remarkably short period of time, the Christian faith spread beyond the villages of Palestine throughout the entire Greco-Roman world and beyond, all the way to the imperial palace. Church Fathers had to face the challenge of adapting a successful classical system of education in order to express the new truths of Christianity. Greek and Latin authors were eagerly adapted, assimilated and made relevant. Christian authors recognized that the intellectual tradition of the classical past was not entirely alien to them. For example, Stoic ethics that were critical of slavery or wealth were an important part of contact between the new faith and the ancient culture. Similarly, Platonic metaphysics affirmed divine transcendence, the freedom of the human will, the immortality of the soul, and the idea that virtue is necessary and sufficient for happiness. In early Christian thinkers such as Justin, Clement of Alexandria and Origen, Platonism and Christian thought came together in new ways. In terms of literary style and poetical form, the supreme model in poetry was Homer and this remained true through the late Byzantine period when schoolboys memorized between thirty and fifty lines of Homer each day. An elementary school course normally included the first book of the Iliad and one play each of Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes. Byzantine teachers of the twelfth century are found debating the question whether the superhuman elements in Homer's poetry required one to reject the historicity of Odysseus and the Trojan War. In the fifth century

Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus in Syria, composed dozens of letters decorated with Homeric echoes.<sup>3</sup> But the central question is: would the classical tradition have survived in late Byzantium and beyond if our early Church Fathers had not appreciated and encouraged the study of classical texts during the early days of Byzantium?

There can be no question that the appreciation of classical literature owes much to the spirit of the Cappadocian fathers, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and of course, John Chrysostom. All of them developed their rhetorical skills following principles of oratory established by ancient orators. All of them were well-versed in classical literature, which they regularly quoted and to which they alluded in their own writings.<sup>4</sup> For example, as a young man, Basil counted many prominent non-Christian Greeks among his teachers, including Libanius, one of the greatest professors of rhetoric of late antiquity. Basil learned his lessons well as we can see from his works in which he regularly quotes or alludes to Plato and ancient poets, especially Homer and Hesiod, but also the tragedians and ancient historians such as Herodotus, Xenophon, Thucydides and Plutarch. His views on classical texts are best expressed in his much celebrated essay "Address to Young Men" about "How they might Profit from Greek Literature" where he makes it clear that there are valuable lessons to be learned from an attentive reading of ancient classics.<sup>5</sup> That Basil remained open to the classical Greek authors is all the more remarkable inasmuch as Greek religion continued to provide Christianity with serious competition and remained a viable option for his 4th century contemporaries.

Similarly, Gregory of Nazianzus' works contain numerous references to ancient mythological figures and themes, including a famous lengthy description of ancient mystery cults. In his *Eulogy of St. Basil*,<sup>6</sup> Gregory compares Basil's family and lineage to the great houses of antiquity, of Pelops,



Alcmaeon, and Heracles, and compares his education to that offered to Achilles by the centaur Chiron.

These examples demonstrate the extent to which the early Fathers kept an open mind to the culture and traditions of their religious rivals. Of course, they could also be critical, and their appropriation of the classical tradition was informed by the canons and criteria of the Christian faith. Nonetheless, their openness and tolerance towards ancient literature is best seen in the fact that the Byzantine school curriculum included ancient authors, and great value was attached to classical education. The maintenance of such a curriculum entailed the preservation of the literary texts in the best condition possible, in order that they be properly understood and passed on to future generations.

The respectful attitude of the Church fathers towards much of ancient literature is particularly important because of its timing. As Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, the fate of the Classical world and its heritage was potentially at risk. The enlightened approach of the Church Fathers therefore insured the survival of the classical tradition. They established a precedent and standard for later generations to follow. They essentially put a seal of approval on ancient literature, which they conveyed not only through their works but most importantly through their own literary activity. Within a century of their own lifetimes they became Classics in their own right, and their works were copied and studied by later scholars. Thus, we have 1500 manuscripts of Gregory of Nazianzus' Orations, and fourteen commentators known to us by name explained his prose and classical allusions, and at least two lexica were in existence before the tenth century, interpreting his vocabulary. The Byzantine polymath, Michael Psellus, wrote two treatises comparing St. Gregory's style to Isocrates and Demosthenes. The study of their writings with their classical references and allusions drew considerable attention to ancient works

and ensured the permanence and accessibility of these works for Byzantine readers. The absorption of the classics by such men as Gregory and Basil deeply shaped the attitudes of the Byzantines towards the classics throughout the life of Byzantium. Without the intellectual climate produced by such an attitude, neither the scholarly interest in Hellenism nor the sheer power of the Greek spirit could have ensured the survival of ancient Greek literature.

Thus it seems appropriate that the tradition regarding the institution of the feast of the Three Hierarchs is a lesson in unity, tolerance and acceptance. According to Byzantine historians around 1100 AD, during the reign of Alexius I Comnenus, there were debates among the scholars of Constantinople as to which of the three hierarchs commemorated in the month of January was the greatest. Some decided in favor of Basil because of his intelligence and austere morality; others for John Chrysostom, because of the convincing gentleness of his discourses; and others were attracted to Gregory for his elegant rhetoric and dialectical cleverness. In this conflict, Bishop John, the Metropolitan of Euchaita, intervened and spoke about a vision he had had of the three hierarchs, who told him that among them there was neither disagreement nor division, but unity of faith, and that a common day should be chosen to celebrate the Liturgy in their honor and to "thank God for the graces which He has bestowed to all three of them." The message seems clear: rather than elevate a single voice to the level of exclusive authority, the church in her wisdom embraced a diversity of viewpoints, suggesting that the life of the mind is best served by a plurality of voices.

The example set by the early Church Fathers encouraged the study and therefore preservation of the classical tradition by later generations. Later theologians followed their example and preserved in their writings the classical heritage. Texts were copied and studied, commentaries and scholia on ancient works were systematically produced preserving not



only original passages that would otherwise be lost, but also offering useful interpretations of ancient works. The work of Photius, Patriarch of Constantinople during the ninth century, stands out in this regard. Besides his *Lexicon*, a list of words and expressions he collected in the course of his voracious reading, Photius was also the author of the *Bibliotheca* (*Myriobiblios*), in which he describes 386 books, including many classical, late antique, and early Byzantine works, which are otherwise lost. The work consists of 280 chapters, each corresponding to a volume on the shelf in Photios' personal library. They vary in length from two lines to seventy pages, a total of 1600 printed pages in the modern edition. Following Photios' tradition, Arethas, archbishop of Caesarea, collected a large personal library and commissioned copies of ancient works. Arethas had the habit of adding notes in the margins of his books to identify transcripts of other volumes he possessed, but which have subsequently been lost. Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenetos (AD 912-959) had extracts from ancient Greek literature produced. During his reign, Constantinople became the center of the Greek spirit and a source of manuscripts. For example the world famous Codex Venetus A, with its valuable commentaries on Homer and the best texts from Aeschylus, Sophocles and Apollonius of Rhodes, comes precisely from this period.

The monasteries of Mt. Athos also played an important role in the history of preservation and transmission of ancient texts. For centuries, monks laboriously copied cultural works from the past, especially books of the church and theological learning, saving them for posterity. With the fall of Constantinople to the Turks in 1453, a large number of manuscripts were lost. According to contemporary sources, over 120,000 manuscripts are supposed to have been destroyed during the three day plundering of the city. A large number of manuscripts escaped destruction, however, and were transported to Western Europe by Byzantine scholars

who fled carrying their valuable possessions with them. Once they settled in Europe they began copying their manuscripts. The discovery of printing helped their reproduction. In the period that followed the fall of Constantinople, scholars, writers, and traders often visited Mt. Athos and obtained manuscripts that were later reproduced in Western Europe, mostly in Venice. This was the beginning of a tradition of classical scholarship in the west that continues to this day.

Until recently, research in classical scholarship has been characterized by traditional methods. However, the past three decades have produced the most efficient and productive research tool yet developed, the computer. In 1972 a major database project was established at the University of California, the Thesaurus of the Greek Language, known by its Latin name as Thesaurus Linguae Graecae or TLG. The aim of the project is to produce a permanent digital corpus containing all extant Greek literary works from antiquity to the present era. In the thirty years of its existence, the Thesaurus project has collected more than 15,000 bibliographical records, representing more than 3500 authors and 11,000 works, starting with Homer and continuing to 1453.<sup>7</sup> By digitizing these works (including some which exist only in rare editions in remote libraries), the project has ensured that whatever has survived from antiquity through Byzantium will never be lost and will be readily available. Thanks to modern technology, the entire corpus of ancient Greek literature is available on a single compact disk. What is more important, however, is the fact that the existence of this technology has given us better and more efficient ways to confirm the presence of classical themes in patristic and Byzantine theological works. With the use of the TLG one can search the occurrence and frequency of words or expressions of any given author, genre, or historical period. This kind of search would previously have required the intense reading of thousands of works and millions of lines of text, something practically impossible. Today it can



be done in seconds. For example, St. John Chrysostom is the largest single author represented in the TLG corpus with more than 4.5 million words in edited homilies, letters, and commentaries. Locating all the occurrences of a given word in his works takes less than a second. A few searches in the TLG corpus of theological works yields very interesting results. The name of Odysseus appears 5000 times in theological works although the name of his faithful wife, Penelope appears only 450 times. Homer is the classical author most often cited, with 2900 references. Plato is cited 2500 times, and Aristotle 951 times. These are, of course, provisional figures since they represent a significant percentage but not the complete corpus of extant theological works. They will undoubtedly grow as the collection grows over time.

Greeks are the recipients of a long cultural heritage unparalleled for its brilliance in literature, philosophy, and the arts. The privilege of being the heir to such a heritage brings pride, but also the responsibility to maintain this tradition, study it, understand it, appreciate it and pass it on to future generations, not as dry encyclopedic knowledge or as empty cultural rhetoric, but in meaningful ways that relate deeply and authentically to their experience. The early Church Fathers recognized the spiritual and intellectual values of Hellenism and preserved as much of it as they possibly could. Their firmly held convictions did not prevent them from appreciating the best that was available to them. Following their example, generations of scholars worked laboriously to preserve this material and hand it down to us. Now it is our turn to do the same, and modern technology has come to our aid in ways that were unimaginable even forty years ago.

The question of the preservation of our Greek cultural heritage is a more pressing one for those of us living outside the borders of Greece, in what we usually term as the "Diaspora." Questions about education and the perpetuation of the Greek language and culture come up every day prompting a range

of different views. The Church Fathers set an example for us – an example which continues to be both relevant and timely. In the words of St. Basil: "All the writers we remember for their wisdom, have in different ways, and each to the best of his power, discoursed in praise of virtue. To these men, we must listen and apply their words to our lives. For the one who confirms his devotion to wisdom by his deeds, unlike those who merely talk, alone has understanding, but the others, 'flit about like shadows' (τοὶ δὲ σκιαὶ ἀίσουσιν)."<sup>8</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Roy MacLeod, ed., *The Library of Alexandria: Centre of Learning in the Ancient World* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Plutarch, *Cato Maior* 23.3

<sup>3</sup> Yves Azéma, *Théodoret de Cyr. Correspondance* (Sources Chrétiennes 98; Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1964).

<sup>4</sup> For the influence of classical education on the Cappadocian Fathers see L. Méridier, *L'influence de la seconde sophistique sur l'oeuvre de Grégoire de Nysse* (Paris, 1906); R. R. Ruether, *Gregory of Nazianzus: Rhetor and Philosopher* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); J. A. McGuckin, *St. Gregory of Nazianzus: An Intellectual Biography* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001); K. Demoen, *Pagan and Biblical Exempla in Gregory Nazianzen: A Study in Rhetoric and Hermeneutics* (Corpus Christianorum, Lingua Patrum 2; Turnhout: Brepols, 1996); R. C. Gregg, *Consolation Philosophy: Greek and Christian Paideia in Basil and the Two Gregories* (Patristic Monograph Series 3; Cambridge, Mass., 1975); M. Rist, "Basil's 'Neo-Platonism': Its Background and Nature," in *Basil of Caesarea: Christian, Humanist, Ascetic. A Sixteen-Hundredth Anniversary Symposium* (ed. Paul J. Fedwick; Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1981), 137-220; H. Chadwick, *Early Christian Thought and the Classical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> F. Boulenger, *Saint Basile. Aux jeunes gens sur la manière de tirer profit des lettres Helléniques* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1935; repr., 1965).

<sup>6</sup> Funerary oratio in laudem Basilii Magni Caesareae in Cappadocia episcopi 4.1-4 (in Boulenger, F., *Grégoire de Nazianze. Discours funèbres en l'honneur de son frère Césaire et de Basile de Césarée*, [Paris: Picard, 1908], 58-230).



<sup>7</sup>A description of the project, as well as online version of the TLG, can be found at the project's website (<http://www.tlg.uci.edu>).

<sup>8</sup>Homer, *Odyssey* 10.495.

## **To Be a Teacher: The Power of Transformative Pedagogy**

EVA KONSTANTELOU

During the years that we were colleagues at Hellenic College, George Pilitsis and I would often meet at his office to take a break from work and discuss the hot topics of the day over a cup of coffee. Our collegial conversations were frequently interrupted by a knock on the door that announced the visit of one of George's students. I had never seen George more animated than he was in the presence of his students, offering a word of advice, assuring someone that she, too, would be able to learn Greek, or assisting with an assignment. One of George's defining characteristics was his ability to share himself, his ideas, and his passion for Greek language and culture with his beloved students. This essay on the power of teachers and students to remake the world by imagining what is possible, is dedicated to George's memory.

## **Of "Pedagogues" and "Pedagogy:" Origins and Evolution of the Concepts**

The concepts of "pedagogy" and the "pedagogue" have undergone interesting twists and turns in the evolution of their meaning in the context of modern educational theory and practice. In this paper I would like to explore conflicting ideals of the role of the teacher and the nature of his/her relationship with the student in the educative process.